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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1861
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0086
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME PRIORITY 0015
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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DEPT PLS PASS HHS-STEIGER AND HICKEY AND CDC-COX AND BLOUNT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [AMED](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: AI IN W. BENGAL-SITREP 16: GOWB IMPOSES STATEWIDE BAN ON POULTRY TRADING

REF: KOLKATA 42 AND PREVIOUS

1. (U) SUMMARY: On February 5, the West Bengal government imposed a statewide ban on poultry trading. The ban will be effective until further notice. With most areas reporting no unusual poultry deaths for the first time in weeks, the GOWB is preparing to launch final clean up and culling operations. The spread of the H5N1 virus, however, does not appear to be under control yet. End Summary.

2. (U) On February 5, the GOWB imposed a statewide ban on poultry trading, including buying and selling of eggs. Previously, there had only been a ban in the AI-infected areas. The statewide ban will be effective until further order from the government, which will review the situation daily. A senior GOWB official told Post that they had decided to impose a total ban because the partial ban was not effective.

3. (U) On February 4, for the first time since the outbreak, the West Bengal Animal Resource Department (ARD) did not "notify" any new areas as AI-infected. None of the 14 affected districts -- except Murshidabad, where 14 birds died -- reported any further unusual poultry deaths. Media reports quoted senior GOI officials suggesting that "the worst may be over" in West Bengal. One W. Bengal ARD official appeared to share the sentiment, saying, "The culling phase is over and we want to make sure the mopping up is done well. The government does not want to take any chances with human health."

4. (U) Official GOWB statistics put the current culling figure at 3.3 million. The GOI provided an additional USD 1.5 million to W. Bengal to meet the compensation demand. The number of culling teams has been reduced to 295 (down from a high of 1,014).

5. (U) A total of 2.86 million people have been examined till date. Of these, around 4,000 people were found to be suffering from fever (0.14 percent). Twenty-three human samples have been tested and all reported negative. In addition, three cullers, suffering from fever and flu-like symptoms, are under observation. Their blood samples have been sent for testing.

6. (U) Comment: The GOWB appears eager to get AI off the front pages and to return the state to a semblance of normalcy. However, the decision to impose a statewide ban on poultry trading, the inclusion of police in accompanying culling teams

(reftel), and the GOI directive for neighboring states to conduct preventive culling (reftel), indicates that the outbreak is not under control yet. What may occur in W. Bengal for some time are sporadic bird deaths in small numbers, most of which will not make headlines.

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